UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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TWENTY WHOOPING CRANES NOW HEADING FOR NESTING AREA IN CANADA

Aerial reconnaissance made in Texas April 15 over the wintering grounds of the rare whooping crane indicate that 20 of the big white birds are winging their way to nesting grounds near Great Slave Lake in Canada, the Department of the Interior reported today.

The April 15 count showed that only eight whoopers remained on the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and the nearby portions of the Texas Gulf coast.

Observations made April 12 found 16 birds remaining, four less than were sighted earlier in the week. The initial migration of four birds apparently occurred during the first week of April. The remaining birds are expected to depart in a few days.

The nesting grounds on Wood Buffalo Park in northern Canada are about 2,500 miles from Aransas. Last year, 38 whooping cranes departed from Aransas for the northern nesting grounds, but only 32 adult birds with no young returned. In the late winter months only 28 whooping cranes could be located during the various reconnaissance flights over the Refuge and other parts of the Texas coast.

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